

Exemplar Informational Texts: English Language Arts - “Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry”

Anaya, Rudolfo. “Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry.” *The Anaya Reader*. New York: Warner Books, 1995. (1995)

In a recent lecture, “Is Nothing Sacred?”, Salman Rushdie, one of the most censored authors of our time, talked about the importance of books. He grew up in a household in India where books were as sacred as bread. If anyone in the household dropped a piece of bread or a book, the person not only picked it up, but also kissed the object by way of apologizing for clumsy disrespect.

He goes on to say that he had kissed many books before he had kissed a girl. Bread and books were for his household, and for many like his, food for the body and the soul. This image of the kissing of the book one had accidentally dropped made an impression on me. It speaks to the love and respect many people have for them.

I grew up in a small town in New Mexico, and we had very few books in our household. The first one I remember reading was my catechism book. Before I went to school to learn English, my mother taught me catechism in Spanish. I remember the questions and answers I had to learn, and I remember the well-thumbed, frayed volume which was sacred to me.

Growing up with few books in the house created in me a desire and a need for them. When I started school, I remember visiting the one room library of our town and standing in front of the dusty shelves. In reality there were only a few shelves and not over a thousand books, but I wanted to read them all. There was food for my soul in the books, that much I realized.

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